

VZCZCXRO7101  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV  
DE RUEHCV #1193/01 1662123  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 152123Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9024  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001193

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: UN NUEVO TIEMPO: BUILDING IN VENEZUELA; LOBBYING  
IN LATIN AMERICA

REF: CARACAS 001107

CARACAS 00001193 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT RICHARD DOWNES,  
REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) leaders told visiting Special Coordinator for Venezuela Deborah McCarthy June 14 that they were happy with their party's initial efforts to become a nationwide opposition party. They noted that the party now had strong leaders in all states and is working hard to build grassroots support throughout Venezuela. The UNT leaders expressed appreciation for USG advocacy for freedom of expression in Venezuela and reviewed their own international efforts to educate other Latin American governments about Venezuela's "democratic deficit." Ongoing student demonstrations in defense of civil liberties have been a pleasant surprise to UNT leaders, who have provided some logistical support. The UNT as a nationwide party is relatively new and still faces many organizational hurdles in trying to translate Manuel Rosales' strong Zulia base and respectable showing in the 2006 presidential race and into an opposition movement that can challenge President Chavez. End Summary.

-----  
Making Un Nuevo Tiempo A National Party  
-----

¶2. (C) Special Coordinator for Venezuela Deborah McCarthy met June 14 with Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) party President Omar Barboza, UNT Secretary General Gerardo Blyde, UNT International Relations Coordinator Timoteo Zambrano, and UNT International Affairs advisor Ambassador Luis Ochoa Teran. Barboza said he was pleased with the party's ongoing efforts to transform itself from a Zulia-based party to a national party. He and Zambrano stressed that party leader and Zulia Governor Manuel Rosales enjoys widespread political legitimacy by virtue of polling over four million votes in the December 2006 presidential election (Note: President Chavez won re-election with over 7 million votes and many hard-line opposition members criticize Rosales for not being a more forceful and dynamic opposition leader).

¶3. (C) Barboza said Rosales swore in 500 committed party volunteers for the Caracas metropolitan area on June 9. The party is focusing on building grassroots support networks in all areas. Barboza reported that the UNT now has proven leaders in all the states of Venezuela, but conceded the party is stronger in the western areas than the eastern part

of Venezuela. Citing internal party polling, Zambrano claimed UNT is the only opposition party that is growing, although he conceded that just over 10 percent of Venezuelans currently identify with the party. UNT leaders complained that the BRV is hampering their work by intercepting -- and sometimes leaking -- their party communications. With fewer and fewer media outlets open to them, they are considering mounting their own radio station or launching a newspaper.

-----  
International Efforts  
-----

¶4. (C) The UNT leaders expressed appreciation for the Secretary's statements in defense of freedom of expression at

SIPDIS

the recent OAS General Assembly in Panama. Noting that Chavismo had to be countered internationally as well as domestically, UNT International Relations Coordinator Zambrano reviewed the party's efforts to inform other Latin American countries of the "democratic deficit" in Venezuela. Rosales had successful May 21-22 meetings with OAS officials in Panama and, after twice postponing a trip to Montevideo, is slated to meet with Uruguayan officials and do press interviews with Uruguayan media outlets the week of June 18.

¶5. (C) Special Coordinator McCarthy said energizing other governments in the region is wise given Chavez' ongoing efforts to try to confine international criticism to the United States and attribute it to the difficult U.S.-Venezuelan bilateral relationship. McCarthy added, and the UNT leaders agreed, that Latin American countries are more increasingly inclined to consider Chavez to be a threat to regional stability, but are still reluctant to make public statements critical of the BRV. Zambrano said Rosales is not considering a visit to Washington anytime soon; he will not do so until visiting additional Latin American countries. However, the UNT is interested in educating NGOs in the

CARACAS 00001193 002.2 OF 002

United States that have traditionally been sympathetic to the Chavez government.

¶6. (C) Barboza said democratic parties consider Colombia a bulwark against Chavismo and expressed concern about U.S. criticism of President Uribe. McCarthy distinguished between the executive branch's ongoing support for the Colombian government and some criticism emanating from the U.S. Congress. Zambrano said the BRV would "not invade Colombia by military means, but by electoral ones." He and UNT SecGen Gerardo Blyde said the BRV is funneling funding to Bolivarian municipal leaders in Colombia and in Central America in an effort to influence elections there.

-----  
Student Protests  
-----

¶7. (C) The UNT leaders confessed that they were taken by surprise by the launching of student demonstrations in the wake of the BRV's closing of RCTV on May 28. The closure of Venezuela's oldest and most popular television broadcaster had a direct impact on the people's freedom, spurring formerly quiescent university students to protest. Blyde said many university leaders remain aloof from political parties, but some have experience in the youth movements of opposition parties. He added that students are making their own strategic decisions, but have approached the UNT for logistical support. UNT has provided some vehicles, megaphones, and other small materials to students groups upon request.

¶8. (C) Blyde predicted that the student demonstrations would abate considerably with the start of summer vacations in July. Nevertheless, students and political parties are

considering ways to continue to rally in defense of civil liberties. They are considering mounting large demonstrations on the 28th day of every month to focus continued public attention on the BRV's closure of RCTV on May 28. Barboza noted that the opposition fears the BRV will use its status as host nation for the June 26 to July 15 America's Cup Soccer Tournament to deny permits for demonstrations. Consequently, UNT and other groups may move up a planned demonstration on June 28 to a few days before June 26.

-----  
Comment  
-----

19. (C) Putting the unbridled confidence of its leaders aside, the UNT is still a young nationwide party organization. UNT planning and implementation, particularly in the international arena, has so far left a lot to be desired. There are clear communication gaps between Rosales and his inner circle from Zulia and non-Zulian party leaders. The UNT's international advisors continue to look to the USG for advice in order to develop and expand UNT's international contacts in defense of democracy. To the party's credit, the UNT appears patiently committed to a long-term democratic strategy and is wisely focusing on building genuine grassroots organizations electoral precinct by electoral precinct.

BROWNFIELD